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Biographic Handbook

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CHILE

Augusto PINOCHET Ugarte

Supreme Chief of the Nation; President, Ruling Junta; Commander in Chief of the Army

In June 1974 Maj. Gen. Augusto Pinochet (pronounced peenohCHET), who has been Commander in Chief of the Army since August 1973 and President of the junta since September of that year, became Supreme Chief of the Nation, a position that gives him expanded executive powers. He had previously served since January 1972 as chief of staff of the army. An intelligent, disciplined and professionally competent infantry officer and military geographer who is known for his toughness, he is dedicated to the national reconstruction of Chile and will tolerate no opposition to that end.



(1973)

The establishment of the position of Supreme Chief of the Nation was promoted by Pinochet among others as a means of consolidating and improving the decisionmaking powers of the executive over the cumbersome, inter-service structure. He did not, however, get as much authority as he sought, and the junta still retains considerable powers of its own. Respected by the other junta members, Pinochet has a harmonious working relationship with them, and all decisions continue to be made unanimously. The general was selected to head the government because he represents the military's oldest institution, not because he possesses any leadership qualities superior to those of the other junta members. Pinochet will apparently retain the executive functions indefinitely.

[redacted] Pinochet was a late participant in plotting the overthrow of President (1970-73) Salvador Allende, and some lower ranking army officers view him as having been indecisive in opposing the former President. In subsequent interviews and public statements, however, he has

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sought to reserve for himself the major responsibility for the planning and execution of the coup. He has claimed that he initiated the coup plans in April 1972 and that he was the only one who knew all the details when the actual overthrow took place.

President of the Junta

Periodically exhorting the people to work together for the goal of national reconstruction, Pinochet has said, "The sacrifice will be total... Everyone will pay the tab, and everyone will help get us out of the chaos." Like his predecessor, he frequently travels within the country to meet people and explain the government's policies, much like a grass roots campaigner.

In response to queries on how long the government's recovery program will take, Pinochet has been equivocal. He told a group of copper miners in January 1974 they must "get it out of their heads that there will be elections in four or five more years." In a February public appearance Pinochet stated that the state of seige and security measures would remain in effect indefinitely and that "It is possible that before the end of the armed forces government political activities will be reinstated, but in no way will it happen before five years."

Described prior to the coup as singularly apolitical, Pinochet has never been involved in partisan politics. He has come down hard on politicians of all persuasions, blaming them for the economic and political problems that necessitated the overthrow of Allende. He has been particularly concerned with the Marxist influence in Chile and has promoted the government's attempts to eliminate all vestiges of that philosophy from the country. Despite on and off frictions between the government and the recessed Christian Democratic Party, the general favors maintaining contact with the party to elicit its views on the government's domestic policies. He has also indicated an interest in creating a national civic movement of

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youth and women's organizations and small businessmen's guilds to support the government.

Pinochet has been sensitive to charges from abroad that the government repeatedly violates human rights, particularly those of prisoners. Acknowledging that there was a problem in this area in the initial months after the coup, he has since claimed that measures have been taken to rectify the situation. In an August 1974 interview he stated that there would be no more executions and that some military men had been punished for maltreatment and torture of prisoners. He insists, however, that stringent internal security measures are necessary to prevent a resurgence of extremist activity and that self-censorship of the press will be relaxed only "when the situation is normal." Conscious of Chile's need for a better image abroad, the general is said to have authorized the expenditure of up to one million dollars to have a US advertising agency improve its tarnished image.

A Peruvian Threat?

Pinochet is among those military officers who have been alarmed at the rather significant acquisitions of modern arms by the government of Peru. Those officers fear that Peru may use the weapons to retake territory ceded to Chile after the War of the Pacific (1879-1883). Pinochet was cool to Peruvian President Juan Velasco's call for an arms limitation agreement, noting that the threat from the north necessitated the preparation of an adequate Chilean defense. Pinochet has been vigorously searching for sources of armaments, requesting commitments from the United States in particular. He has also tried to elicit support for Chile's position from other Latin American countries, and while in Brazil for the March 1974 inauguration of President Ernesto Geisel, he asked for military assistance

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Pinochet also ordered a study prepared for distribution to friendly Latin American Heads of State to dispel the notion that Chilean apprehensions of Peruvian intentions lacked substance. Since that time the President has taken note of the lessening of tensions between his country and Peru, but he continues to underscore the dangers involved and the need to increase overall military strength. The general plans to attend the 150th anniversary commemoration of the Battle of Ayacucho in Peru in December 1974.

Military Student and Instructor

Augusto Pinochet Ugarte was born into a middle class family on 25 November 1915 in Valparaíso. He attended the University of Chile for 2 years, specializing in judicial and social science, before entering the Chilean Military Academy. He was unable to meet the physical requirements for admission to the academy for 2 successive years, but the reason is not a matter of current record.

Upon his graduation from the academy in 1936, Pinochet was commissioned a second lieutenant. He subsequently worked his way steadily through the ranks, generally in infantry assignments. During 1949-51 he was a student at the Command and General Staff Course of the Army War College. Important posts he has held in recent years include those of: commander, 7th Infantry Regiment, 1961-63; chief of staff, 2d Army Division, 1968; commander, 6th Army Division, 1967-71; and commander, Santiago Garrison, March 1971-January 1972.

A well-known military geographer, Pinochet has been an instructor at the Chilean Army War College (1942-46, 1954) and at the Ecuadorean Army War College in Quito (1956-59). From 1964 to 1968 he served as deputy commandant of the Chilean Army War College. He is a member of the Geographic Society of Chile and has written three geography books, at least one of which is used as a secondary school textbook.

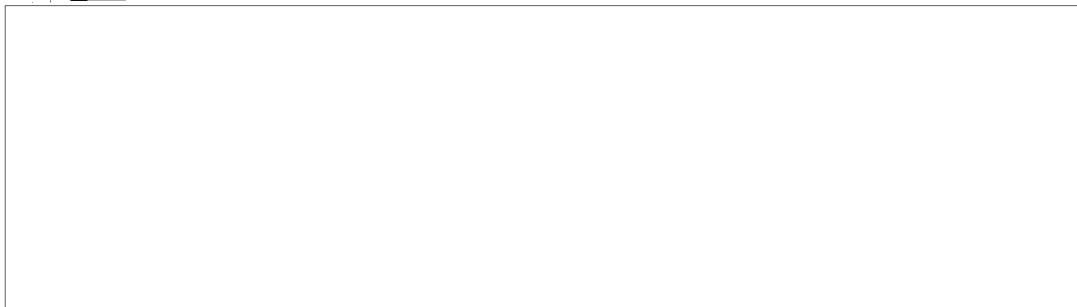
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Pinochet has visited the United States three times. He was a member of a Chilean military mission in 1956, toured this country and the Panama Canal Zone in 1965 and 1968, and returned to the Canal Zone in 1972.

Personal Data

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Quiet, mild-mannered and businesslike, Pinochet is hard-working and dedicated. He nevertheless enjoys attending parties; he prefers to drink Scotch or pisco sours. Pinochet smokes cigarettes. He is interested in sports, including fencing, boxing and horseback riding, and avidly practices gymnastic exercises every morning. He also enjoys discussing world military problems. He speaks some French and English.

In 1943 Pinochet married Lucía Hiriart Rodríguez, the daughter of a former Senator and Minister of the Interior. Mrs. Pinochet, who has lived most of her life in Santiago, was born in Antofagasta. She has a fondness for archeology and together with her husband has explored many ruins. Mrs. Pinochet has been involved in various charity projects. She insists, however, that her primary concern is her home and family. The Pinochets have three daughters and two sons and six grandchildren.

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